

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 IO-13 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /104 W
-----044656 261641Z /47

R 261301Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8507
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3628

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1,4
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, SY, SA
SUBJ: SYRIAN JITTERS OVER IRAQ'S POLICY

1. SUMMARY: SYRIANS ARE WORRIED IRAQ MAY BE ENGAGED
IN FUNDAMENTAL REORIENTATION OF POLICY AWAY FROM SOVIETS
AND TOWARD THE GULF. SPECTRE OF HOSTILE IRAQ FREED OF
SOVIET CONSTRAINTS AND ALLIED TO IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA
GIVES SYRIANS NIGHTMARES. THUS FAR, IT LOOKS LIKE SYRIANS
ARE LEAPING TO UNWARRANTED CONCLUSIONS BASED ON NORMAL
HYPER-SENSITIVITY TO ANYTHING IRAQ DOES. NEVERTHELESS,
SYRIANS CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO UNDERMINE
IRAQI REORIENTATION. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW IT WOULD
SEEM A GOOD THING TO ENCOURAGE IRAQ IF IT IS INDEED MOVING
TOWARD THE SAUDIS AND AWAY FROM THE SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.
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2. MFA HAS BEEN SURPRISED AND DISTURBED BY SUDDEN
SWING IN IRAQI FOREIGN POLICY. IRAQI EFFORTS TO IMPROVE
RELATIONS WITH IRAN HAVE BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR SOME
TIME BUT SUDDEN THRUST TO IMPROVE TIES TO SAUDIS AND
GULF STATES CAUGHT MFA OFF GUARD.

3. MFA DIVISION DIRECTOR JOUEJATI SAID THAT SCOPE AND RAMIFICATIONS OF IRAQI MOVE ARE STILL UNCLEAR. HE SPECULATES THAT THE COMBINATION OF EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND DISCOVERY OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN ARMED FORCES IS HAVING PROFOUND IMPACT ON IRAQI LEADERSHIP. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IRAQ MAY BE EMBARKED ON FUNDAMENTAL REORIENTATION PLACING ITSELF SQUARELY AMONG THE GULF STATES, TURNING AWAY FROM MIDDLE EAST CONFRONTATION AND DISTANCING ITSELF FROM SOVIET UNION.

4. JOUEJATI BELIEVES IT WILL BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR IRAQ TO CHANGE ITS ORIENTATION WITHOUT PURGING SOME ELEMENTS OF THE BAATHI INFRASTRUCTURE AND WITHOUT, ULTIMATELY, BREAKING WITH THE SOVIET UNION. WITHOUT SUCH MOVES IRAQ CANNOT SUCCEED IN DISPELLING GULF STATES MISTRUST OF IRAQ'S INTENTIONS. JOUEJATI CLAIMS THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT MFA FEARS IRAQ'S LEADERS HAVE IN MIND.

5. WE BELIEVE MFA IS GUILTY OF DRAWING UNWARRANTED CONCLUSIONS FROM RECENT IRAQI MOVES. VISION OF IRAQ ALLIED WITH IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA GIVES SYRIAN PLANNERS NIGHTMARES SINCE IT COULD HELP IRAQ OBTAIN A MILITARY AND ECONOMIC STRANGLEHOLD ON SYRIA. THUS FAR, IRAQ'S COURTING OF SAUDI ARABIA HAS HAD NO VISIBLE BACKLASH ON SYRIA. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR DAOUDY WAS WELL RECEIVED BY THE SAUDIS ON HIS RECENT VISIT AND ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT CAME BACK WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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A SAUDI PLEDGE OF A 500 MILLION SAUDI RIAL LINE OF CREDIT FOR SEVERAL PENDING PROJECTS INCLUDING COMPLETION OF THE DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TERMINAL.

6. NEVERTHELESS, SYRIANS SEE IRAQ AS CAPABLE OF ENDLESS MISCHIEF, PARTICULARLY WHERE SYRIA IS CONCERNED AND THEY WILL DO WHAT THEY CAN TO SOUR THE PRESUMED BUDDING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA. FONMIN KHADDAM TOLD JOUEJATI THAT THIS WAS THE REASON HE PUBLICLY ACCUSED IRAQ OF RENEGING ON ITS TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOVIETS. KHADDAM SAID HE KNEW THE IRAQIS WOULD HAVE TO DENY SUCH A CLAIM AND THUS PUT OFF ANY IRREPARABLE BREACH BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES--AN APPROACH WORTHY OF KHADDAM AND THE LEVANT.

7. WE BELIEVE THE SYRIAN ASSESSMENT IS GREATLY OVERDRAWN BASED ON HYPER-SENSITIVE TO ANY IRAQI MOVE. HOWEVER, INSOFAR AS IRAQ IS TOYING WITH POLITICAL REORIENTATION, IT SEEMS TO US WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE IT, REGARDLESS OF SYRIAN OPPOSITION.
PELLETREAU

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, SECURITY, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, GULFS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC03628
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DC ALSO X1
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780264-1135
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780621/aaaaasix.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3b251782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2213991
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN JITTERS OVER IRAQ'S POLICY
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, SY, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3b251782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014